

ALSACE-LORRAINE: A BORDER PROBLEM

by

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This report is based in part upon a visit to Alsace-Lorraine by Dr. Wertheimer in April 1929.

IN November 1919, eleven days after the Armistice, the armies of France marched into Strasbourg amid the plaudits of the population. The "lost provinces" of Alsace-Lorraine had been restored to France and their people rejoiced. Eleven years later, the so-called *malaise alsacien*—the serious dissatisfaction in the recovered provinces—constitutes one of the most difficult problems facing France today. What has brought about the change of sentiment in Alsace-Lorraine? What is this *malaise*? What is the attitude of the French government toward it?

To comprehend the complicated problem of the relation of the recovered provinces to the mother country, one must recall at least a bit of their checkered history. In 1648 France secured Alsace¹ by the Treaty of Westphalia, and in 1659 France was recognized as the protector of the Duchy of Lorraine. Before the middle of the seventeenth century Alsace had formed part of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburgs; Lorraine had belonged to the Spanish Netherlands. Thus, from the second half of the seventeenth century until 1871, Alsace and Lorraine were under French rule. They enjoyed the benefits of the *Grand Siècle* of Louis XIV; they participated in the French Revolution and in the Napoleonic reforms. Before the Revolution there had been no emphasis placed on ethnic or linguistic nationalism in France; 80 per cent of the Alsatian people spoke an Allemand patois very closely akin to German, and had spoken this dialect for some 1,500 years. During the Revolution, nationalism as we know it today may be said to have been born. As a result, some real attempts were made at that time to teach the French language to the Alsace-

Lorrainers. A great many of the inhabitants, especially the peasants, continued to speak the dialect, however. After 1871, when the two provinces had been annexed to Germany, the France of the Third Republic was completely consolidated into a strongly centralized, anti-clerical State whose nationalism still smacked strongly of the Jacobin fervor of the Revolution. In 1918 Alsace and Lorraine, predominantly Catholic, escaped from a conquered and ruined Germany and were once more, as in 1648, united with a victorious France. The people rejoiced; they "had not yet experienced the administrative and political methods of the Third Republic," as one French writer puts it.²

The French, on their part, received a distinct shock. Brought up to regard Alsace-Lorraine as "sacred symbols of national unity," as two historic French provinces which had been "outrageously torn by force from the fatherland and annexed to Germany, the hereditary foe,"³ many Frenchmen have felt during the last decade as though, instead of their own lost provinces, they had acquired a changeling. For not only did the people of Alsace-Lorraine speak a foreign language, but their entire development, during forty-seven years under German rule, had been in the opposite direction from that taken by the France of the Third Republic. Because of their historic background of changing masters, German nationalism had left them cold, just as French nationalism does not now inspire them. Because of this background, the Alsatians particularly have developed a strong tendency to opposition, a tendency which French policy since 1918 has considerably aggravated.

1. Except for the city of Strasbourg, which was ceded to France in 1681.

2. René Gillouin, *Trois Crises*, p. 9n.

3. Carlton J. H. Hayes, *France: A Nation of Patriots*, p. 252.

Under Germany, the inhabitants were never satisfied; now that they are once more French, they are still dissatisfied. Opposition to the existing government seems almost to have become a habit.

A noted French publicist recently said to the Alsatians, "You are a race of administrators, we are a race of politicians."⁴ This expresses part of the psychological difference between Alsace and the rest of France. The period between 1871 and 1918 increased this difference, besides affording an excellent opportunity for improving the Alsatian technique of opposition. The provinces were never happy under German rule; their struggles with Prussian Berlin are a matter of history and served to deepen the desire of patriotic Frenchmen in France to recover the lost provinces.

The grievances of the border population for in reality that is what the people of Alsace and Lorraine are—may be grouped under the following heads: administrative, linguistic and cultural, religious, and political.

The problem from the point of view of the recovered provinces seems not to be an economic one at present. The provinces seem in fact to have benefited economically by re-annexation with France.⁵ The Rhine port of Strasbourg, which under German administration never attained a movement of 2,000,000 tons of goods, exceeded 4,000,000 tons in 1927. Not only has the French government aided in the development of the port, but it has put into effect a series of measures tending to give it the status enjoyed by French seaports. As a result, commercial activity in the port of Strasbourg, as early as 1924, was 38 per cent greater than it had been in 1913.⁶

4. André Siegfried. Quoted by Fritz Kiener in "L'Alsace après le verdict de Colmar," *La Revue des Vivants*, July 1928, p. 52.

5. Gillouin, *op. cit.*, p. 54, *et seq.*

6. Alfred Uhry, "The Rhine Port of Strasbourg," *L'Alsace Française*, February 27, 1926, p. 166. In 1927 the movement of goods totaled 4,313,168 tons. It should be noted, however, that until 1927 the port of Kehl, across the river from Strasbourg, was considered part of the port of Strasbourg. (Cf. Port Autonome de Strasbourg, *Le Port de Strasbourg*; also H. Laufenburger, "Economie de l'Alsace," *La Revue des Vivants*, August 1928, p. 307.)

For the economic importance to France of the re-annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, cf. *The Economic Development of Post-War France*, by W. F. Ogburn and William Jaffé, especially p. 28 *et seq.* The natural and industrial equipment of the recovered provinces, according to the authors, forms an extremely important addition to the French domain. On the other hand, the economic necessity of union between the iron of Lorraine and the coal and particularly the coke of the Ruhr district in Germany is one which must transcend international frontiers. Politically, it was settled once for all at

The population of Alsace-Lorraine, according to the last French census (1926), is 1,795,100.⁷ The French census does not give the languages spoken by inhabitants, but merely notes the number of French citizens and the number of aliens, 1,630,103 being given as French and 164,997 as aliens. The German census of 1910 is therefore the last census which reports the languages of the inhabitants, and according to it 87.2 per cent gave German as their mother tongue, while 10.9 per cent claimed French and 0.2 per cent gave both French and German.⁸ For Alsace alone the proportion of German-speaking inhabitants was 94.4 per cent, while in Lorraine 73.5 per cent gave German as their mother tongue.

It is in the so-called autonomy movement that opposition to French policy in the recovered provinces has crystallized. The growth of the present movement will be discussed later; but the existence, in fact the prevalence, of an autonomy movement and the emphasis on the *Heimatrechte* or local rights of the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine under German rule after 1871 should be noted here.

GERMAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVINCES

During the debate in the Reichstag in May 1871 on the future administration of the provinces, Bismarck spoke of the particularism of the Alsatians⁹ and of the desirability of using it as a foundation on which to build. In the provinces there was much talk of autonomy and of the necessity of preserving the Alsatian individuality. At that time there existed the three French

Locarno that the provinces are to belong to France. Economic necessity makes it possible, however, for them to assume the rôle they so greatly desire of becoming a link between France and Germany.

7. Office de Statistique d'Alsace et de Lorraine, *Répertoire des Communes des Départements du Bas-Rhin, du Haut-Rhin et de la Moselle*, p. xviii, xix.

8. The figures are taken from the *Statistisches Jahrbuch für Elsass-Lothringen*, Fünftter Jahrgang 1911, Herausgegeben vom Statistischen Landesamt für Elsass-Lothringen, Strassburg, 1912, p. 20; *Comptes Rendus Statistiques*, Strasbourg, 1921, Fascicule No. 4, p. 21-24. The figures given in both these official publications are the same. In 1902 only 311 out of 1,700 communes in Alsace-Lorraine were listed as predominantly French-speaking. Of these 311, 286 were in Lorraine. (Cf. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für Elsass-Lothringen*, 1902, p. 9.) It is undoubtedly true that the German census minimized the number of French-speaking inhabitants; furthermore many persons who reported themselves as German-speaking to officials of the German government could probably speak French. Nevertheless, even though bilingualism may have been fairly widespread in 1910, the great majority of the population then, as at present, spoke German.

9. Fritz Bronner, *Die Verfassungsbestrebungen des Landesausschusses für Elsass-Lothringen (1876-1911)*, p. 4, *et seq.*

départments,¹⁰ comprising the territory which under Germany became the *Reichsland*, or Imperial Province of Alsace-Lorraine.

German rule was unpopular in Alsace-Lorraine. Bureaucratic Prussian officials who were sent to the provinces were efficient, but unpleasant; the introduction of compulsory military service raised a storm of protest; the "dictator p a r a graph," which empowered the Emperor's representative—the chief official of Alsace-Lorraine—to proclaim martial law at his discretion, was felt to be an insult by the population. This law was not repealed until 1902. The use of French was restricted and changes in the educational system, especially the introduction of compulsory school attendance, caused great friction. The transfer of responsibility for school inspection from the Church to the State was very unpopular.

The Imperial German Constitution did not come into force in Alsace-Lorraine until 1874 and after that the provinces were represented in the German Reichstag by fifteen deputies. The deputies elected in 1874 vehemently protested against annexation of the provinces by Germany. Gradually there was formed a group of Alsatians which began to work for autonomy within the German Empire, and to cultivate local patriotism. These men advocated acceptance of

the new situation but worked for amelioration of the "dictatorship" from Berlin, and for the reform of the school law, and defended the French language. In 1874 the *Reichsland* was granted a provincial chamber—the *Landesausschuss*.¹¹ The members of this body were elected indirectly and its powers were merely consultative at first. Laws passed by the German Reichstag in

1877 and 1879, however, gave the *Landesausschuss* additional powers, enabling it to make local laws for the provinces and vote an annual budget. Its power was limited by the fact that its action might be vetoed by the Reichstag in Berlin, but its status gradually became that of a regional parliament. The *Landesausschuss* was composed of thirty deputies, and from its first meeting the members were united in the aim to secure a constitution for the provinces. Ideas as to methods differed, but they were generally agreed that, as one deputy expressed it, "Every people, be it large or small, has the

right to administer itself;"¹² Alsace-Lorraine should be given the same status as the other states which composed imperial Germany.

AUTONOMY MOVEMENT UNDER GERMANY

It is interesting to note that as early as 1875 an actual autonomy party was formed in the *Reichsland*.¹³ Its members were for



THE POSITION OF ALSACE-LORRAINE IN EUROPE

10. Moselle, Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin, and part of a fourth département, Meurthe.

11. Imperial Decree of October 29, 1874.

12. Bronner, *op. cit.*, p. 62-63.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

the most part liberal in tendency although by no means all of them could be so characterized. Among them seem to have been the most active leaders in the *Landesausschuss* at that time. Furthermore, many of the autonomists, curiously enough, were anti-clerical—an evidence of their liberalism in contrast to the majority of the population which was devoutly Catholic—and during the *Kulturkampf* in Prussia¹⁴ found themselves ranged on the side of the government.

During the decade of the eighties, feeling for France was somewhat alienated in Catholic Alsace-Lorraine by the anti-clerical tendencies of Jules Ferry,¹⁵ and especially by his anti-clerical school legislation.¹⁶

In 1879 Bismarck had attempted to meet the Alsatians halfway by giving them a resident governor, or *Statthalter*. However, the election of 1881 resulted in an overwhelming victory of the so-called "Protesters," the most anti-German element. Bismarck lost patience and there followed suppression of anti-German societies and newspapers, prosecutions, expulsions of French citizens, and more restrictions on the use of the French language. The result was more irritation and bad feeling. There was also great dissatisfaction with the growing militarism of Germany, and in January 1887 only one of the Alsace-Lorraine deputies in the Reichstag voted for the bill increasing the German army. At the general election that year, all the old members from the provinces were re-elected—a protest against Berlin's militarism.¹⁷

After 1900 the agitation for a constitution for Alsace-Lorraine became increasingly stronger and was supported by the broad masses of the people in the provinces. The leaders in the movement were members of the younger generation who had been educated during the German régime. Chief among them was Dr. Ricklin, who worked unceasingly in the Reichstag toward this goal.¹⁸

Finally, on May 31, 1911, the Reichstag granted a new constitution for Alsace-Lor-

raine, which provided for a *Landtag* or legislature, composed of two houses. The lower house was to be elected every five years by universal suffrage and the upper was to be composed of members *ex officio* (representatives of the leading religious bodies, the principal cities, the Council of Agriculture, etc.), and an equal number of members appointed by the Kaiser on the recommendation of the *Bundesrat*. This number, it was stipulated in the law, "may not exceed that of the other members." The *Landtag* had the right to make laws with the consent of the Kaiser.

In 1871 the elected representatives of the people of Alsace-Lorraine had unanimously declared that the people wished to be French and had protested vigorously against annexation to Germany. Many pro-French Alsatians emigrated to France after 1871 and many patriotic Germans came to the provinces; the German government made strenuous attempts to Germanize the conquered territory, which intensified to some extent the sentimental attachment to the older mother country, France. Added to this were the antipathy to German militarism, resentment against the German administration and the great suffering of the war years, 1914-1918.

THE RETURN TO FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

In 1914 Marshal (then General) Joffre upon the occasion of a brief sally into Alsace had declared: "Your return is definitive. You are French forever. France brings to you, with the liberties for which she has always stood, a respect for your liberties, for your traditions, for your convictions, for your customs. I am France. You are Alsace. I bring you the Kiss of France." And this promise was reiterated by all French officials in 1918.

On November 22, 1918 the French armies entered Strasbourg and were greeted with wild enthusiasm. However, the question of

been one of the principal leaders of the autonomy movement in Alsace-Lorraine since the war (cf. p. 477). Of the ten members of the Reichstag from Alsace-Lorraine, in 1910 five belonged to no *Fraktion*, although they were members of the Alsace-Lorraine Center (Catholic) party. They thus preserved their freedom of action and were almost always to be found in the opposition. Four of the ten belonged to the Reich Center party *Fraktion* and the remaining members to the *Reichspartei*. (Fifteen representatives of a party are necessary to form a *Fraktion*.)

14. The conflict between Bismarck and the Catholic Church.

15. The French Minister of Education at that time.

16. Bronner, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 182-83. This is the same Dr. Ricklin who has

autonomy had already reappeared. Dr. Ricklin had convoked the *Landtag* on November 12, 1918 at Strasbourg in order to present the French with regionalism as a *fait accompli*, but the French ignored Ricklin and dissolved the *Landtag*.¹⁹

CITIZENSHIP PROVISIONS UNDER VERSAILLES TREATY

The fact that a large number of Germans who were likely to be unfriendly to France had settled in Alsace-Lorraine between 1871 and 1918 complicated the problem of citizenship in the recovered provinces. Furthermore, some of the native Alsations were not particularly enthusiastic about becoming French citizens. The conditions under which French citizenship may be acquired were laid down by the Versailles Treaty. According to the treaty, persons who lost French nationality in 1871 by the Treaty of Frankfurt and who never acquired any nationality other than German, the descendants of these persons, and persons with no nationality or of unknown nationality, automatically became French citizens. In addition, a number of other categories of individuals were allowed to claim French nationality.²⁰

Germans who did not come under any of the above categories might be naturalized,

provided that they had resided in Alsace-Lorraine continuously, since November 11, 1918 and before August 3, 1914.²¹ Between the end of 1921 and the end of 1924, 11,829 Germans made the necessary application and during that period 1,947 applications were granted, only 548 being definitely rejected.²²

Soon after the Armistice, the French military authorities established *commissions de triage* (selection commissions) in order to eliminate the most anti-French inhabitants from the provinces.²³ The status of the commissions seems to have been entirely extra-legal; they acted in secret and no records of their proceedings are available. It has been estimated, however, that between the Armistice and the end of 1920, some 80,000 persons emigrated to Germany as a result of their activities.²⁴ The French government was responsible for diplomatic and consular protection of those Germans who had applied for naturalization. This responsibility began at the date of application and ended when the request had been acted upon. "However this fact did not prevent the expulsion from French territory of those people who did not obtain naturalization."²⁵ As a result, a good many persons seem to have been deported from the recovered provinces.²⁶

FRENCH PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION

France has one of the most completely centralized governments in the world. In matters of administration, especially of local affairs, there has been little change since the time of Napoleon I, and the direction of almost everything is in Paris. After the war, there were many Frenchmen who realized that it would be difficult to reincorporate Alsace-Lorraine without according to the provinces exceptional treatment for a time

at least. These people felt that it would be a mistake to deprive them of their peculiar local customs. Furthermore, many Frenchmen realized that under German rule the Alsace-Lorrainers had become accustomed to a considerable amount of local autonomy.²⁷ On the other hand, many other Frenchmen claimed that the recovered provinces would

21. Apparently individuals not becoming naturalized Frenchmen remain Germans. (Cf. Treaty of Versailles, Article 79, and Annex, Par. 3.)

22. Niboyet, *op. cit.*, *Supplément pour l'Année, 1925*, p. 78. The applications granted were distributed geographically as follows: Bas-Rhin, 103 out of 4,164 (2.47 per cent); Haut-Rhin, 495 out of 1,746 (28 per cent); Moselle, 1,349 out of 5,919 (22.9 per cent). Rejections were distributed as follows: Bas-Rhin, 19; Haut-Rhin, 77; Moselle, 452. It is interesting to note that in Bas-Rhin, where the autonomists are especially strong, there have been the fewest requests granted.

23. These commissions seem to have included civilian Alsations chosen from the pro-French bourgeoisie. It is reported that much petty spite attended the work of the commissions.

24. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

25. Based on a decision of the *Conseil d'Etat* of July 7, 1922. (Cf. Niboyet, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 328.)

26. Cf. Jacques Fonlupt, "Notre administration et la crise alsacienne," *La Revue des Vivants*, October 1928, p. 656.

27. Cf. p. 466 et seq.

19. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 253, 254, 257.

20. These categories included persons not restored to French nationality under the above-mentioned conditions, who had a male or female French ancestor who had lost his or her French nationality by the Treaty of Frankfurt; all foreigners, not nationals of a German state, who acquired the status of a citizen of Alsace-Lorraine before August 3, 1914; Germans who had been residents of Alsace-Lorraine prior to July 15, 1870; Germans born or domiciled in Alsace-Lorraine who served in the Allied or Associated armies during the great war, and their descendants; all persons born of foreign parents in Alsace-Lorraine before May 10, 1871, and the descendants of such persons; and the husbands or wives of persons who had the right to become French citizens. Individuals were required to make their claims to citizenship before January 15, 1921. (Cf. Treaty of Versailles, Article 79, and Annex, Par. 1 and 2; for legal description of execution of these provisions, cf. J. P. Niboyet, *Répertoire Pratique de Droit et de Jurisprudence d'Alsace et Lorraine*, Vol. II, p. 323-28.)

not be thoroughly French until their relationship to the French State, French language, French law and French schools was the same as that of all other citizens of France. The result of this conflict of opinion within France has been characterized as "five policies within ten years."²⁸ Moreover, in the provinces themselves there has been a conflict between the desire to be French and the determination to retain local differences; this was strengthened by the fact that the inhabitants had come to cherish their hard-won organs of local self-administration. The latter, of course, would not fit into the scheme of French centralized administration.

Under German rule Alsace-Lorraine formed an administrative unit. Every suggestion that the provinces be divided between various German states—i. e. Baden, Bavaria and Prussia—raised storms of protest in the *Reichsland* and intensified particularist local sentiment there. As has been noted, upon re-annexation to France the provinces were at once divided into three *départements*. The French at first set up a temporary civil administration under the Premier, M. Clémenceau, who delegated much of the work to an Under-Secretary of State. For each of the three former French *départements* a commissioner was appointed; the commissioner at Strasbourg was given the title of High Commissioner, although the other two—in Metz and Colmar—were not subordinate to him. They were directly responsible to the Under-Secretary of State. The latter was assisted by a Superior Council, a consultative body of governmental appointees. A so-called General Service for Alsace-Lorraine was also created, composed of a delegate from each Ministry at Paris. The function of this body was to "centralize the administrative action which the Commissioners of the Republic exercise in the territory of Lorraine, Lower Alsace and Upper Alsace." There was, too, a consultative technical body called the Office of Legislative Studies.²⁹

The temporary régime was replaced in 1919, the three commissioners being superseded by a *Commissariat Général* with wide

powers.³⁰ Under the *Commissariat Général* the centralization process continued. The restored *départements* were organized like the other *départements* of France. Under German administration the provincial budget had been submitted to the *Landtag* for approval; when France assumed control it was fused with the French national budget. The appropriate French Ministries at Paris gradually took over the direction of most of the local services. Thus the railways of Alsace-Lorraine were run by the Ministry of Public Works; justice was administered from Paris by the French Ministry of Justice; the mines were placed under the Ministry of Public Works, as was the administration of posts, telegraphs and telephones. French penal legislation and the greater part of the French private law code were introduced. Only in the municipalities and communes was some measure of local autonomy preserved.

CENTRALIZATION POLICY OF THE FRENCH LEFT

In May 1924 M. Herriot and the Radical Socialist party came into power as the result of a general election. This party is avowedly anti-clerical and furthermore advocates centralization of administration.³¹ The new premier made the following declaration of policy:

"The government is convinced that it interprets faithfully the will of its dear peoples finally returned to France, in hastening the advent of the day when the last legislative difference will be effaced between the recovered *départements* and the whole of the territory of the republic. To this end, it will abolish the general commissariat and will prepare the measures which will permit the introduction into Alsace-Lorraine of the whole of the republican legislation."

The result of the accession to power of the Radicals was soon apparent in Alsace-Lorraine. In November 1924 the Superior Council was abolished. The Herriot government had a law passed on July 24, 1925 which substituted for the *Commissariat Général* the *Direction Général des Services d'Alsace et de Lorraine* which was directly dependent on the French Prime Minister and had offices in Paris and Strasbourg. The

28. Gillouin, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

29. Niboyet, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 738, et seq.; Hayès, *op. cit.*, p. 257, 258.

30. M. Millerand held this post from 1919 to 1920; M. Alapetite from 1920 to 1924. (Georges Delahache, *Les Débuts de l'Administration Française en Alsace et en Lorraine*, p. ix.)

31. Cf. R. L. Buell, *Contemporary French Politics*, p. 27-32.

latter was charged with the administration of the civil services which had not been attached to the several Ministries—viz., churches, schools, social insurance, local personnel and pensions. The Paris office had as its function the making of investigations, the control and the centralization of all business transacted by the services at Strasbourg. It also acted as a liaison between the several French Ministries and the services which they directed in Alsace-Lorraine.³²

Under German rule most of the officials of the bureaucracy in Alsace-Lorraine had been natives of the provinces. Furthermore, they had enjoyed special rights and privileges. The advent of the French brought a great influx of French functionaries, who often received important posts formerly held by natives,³³ and who were paid higher salaries than the natives. This was bound to make trouble. The situation was made worse by a decree of April 16, 1920 abridging the special privileges³⁴ which the local functionaries had hitherto enjoyed, in a further move toward centralization. The opposition was so strong that in Haut-Rhin all the local State employees, including the teachers, and in Bas-Rhin all except the teachers went on strike for three days as a protest. As a result, even the telephone, telegraph and postal services ceased. The struggle went on for three years. Finally, in July 1923, a new law helped the situation a bit. Under this, the two categories of functionaries were recognized, a "local" and a "general." The local functionaries were allowed to choose whether they would remain in the former and retain certain local privileges, or join the latter and work under the same conditions as obtained for the civil service in the rest of France. The law increased salaries for the "local" category by 8 per cent, and those for the "general" category by 16 per cent, with an explanation that the cost of living in the recovered provinces was higher than in the rest of France. This law did not

satisfy the local functionaries entirely, however.

The unification of the tax system of Alsace-Lorraine with that of France also caused difficulties. The tax rate in German cities had been relatively high because they operated and financed their own water-works, lighting systems and municipal transportation. This was also true in the cities in Alsace-Lorraine. In France such functions are performed by the State and the expense is distributed throughout the country by national taxation. Accordingly, in Alsace-Lorraine, since its return to France, the cities have had their own high municipal taxes to meet, besides having to pay national taxes. This has made taxes in Alsace-Lorraine higher than in the rest of France.³⁵

The situation in Alsace-Lorraine was further aggravated by the fact that most of the functionaries sent to the recovered provinces from the interior of France, and especially those in minor posts, spoke only French. The large majority of the population speak the Allemand dialect, closely akin to German, and have been educated in German schools. People going to the post office to buy a postage stamp found that the postal clerk could not understand them nor they him. The same was true in the railway stations and in all the ordinary affairs of daily existence where the State touches the lives of the people. Matters which had formerly been settled in Strasbourg in a short time now had to be sent to Paris for decision, became involved in the red tape of administration in the capital, and took a long time to settle. As one French author has put it:

"During the German times when anyone went to an office, he was sure to be received brusquely, but he always got what he had come for. Today, one is sure to be received nicely, but he never gets anything."³⁶

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

During the first flush of enthusiasm for France, after the reunion of the provinces with the old mother country, the language question did not appear acute. The Alsace-

32. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 258-59.

33. In 1918, 22 of the primary school inspectors were natives and only 3 were German; in 1919, 20 were French and only 5 were natives. (*Revue Scolaire*, January 10, 1927, p. 2, cited by Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 259.)

34. Some of these special privileges were as follows: appointments, discharges and transfers could be made only in accordance with strict civil service rules; officials were paid quarterly and in advance; an annual vacation; indemnity for

special expenses incurred; a good pension on retirement; benefits from the German system of social insurance; automatic advancement by right of seniority; in case of death, the heirs of the deceased official were entitled to his salary for the quarter. (Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 259-60.)

35. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

36. Gillouin, *op. cit.*, p. 73n.

Lorrainers showed great zeal in trying to learn French. Gradually, however, owing in part to their annoyance with French policy in other matters concerning the recovered provinces, and in part to the difficulties brought about by the sudden change of the official language from German to French, sentiment grew stronger for the preservation of the dialect as part of the *Heimatrechte* or local (home) rights of the provinces. The French lost no time after the Armistice in changing all the signs in public places from German into French and people who could not read a word of French—and they were legion, especially in the rural districts—found it extremely difficult to get around in their native country. Neither could they read the signs in the railway stations. Interpreters were necessary in the courts, where justice was administered in French. The result was not conducive to sympathy for France, which had imposed these new hardships on the Alsatians and Lorrainers. Since that time, signs in public places have been posted in both French and German, but the reaction of many people in the recovered provinces is still well expressed by the following quotation from a moderate autonomist leader:

“... No Alsatian should be obliged to feel strange or slighted in his own homeland when he speaks the language of his land. The use of interpreters is an unworthy presumption which one might force on a slave people, but which simply cannot be discussed in relation to a people which is being ostensibly freed from bondage. Such a policy breeds nothing but *malaise*.”³⁷

It should be noted that the local dialects, of which there are several, are not written languages. They are used for every-day, homely conversation but, like the Swiss-German dialects to which they are akin, do not lend themselves to the expression of abstract ideas. The written language of the large majority of the people after two generations have been educated in German schools is high German—*Hochdeutsch*.

This is the heart of the language problem. Moreover, many of the French officials who came to the recovered provinces after the Armistice, and above all many people in France itself, regarded the German-speaking natives of Alsace-Lorraine as Germans—“Boches”—and did not hesitate to say so.

This wounded the feelings of the Alsatians and aggravated the situation.

FRENCH, THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

In the primary schools the language problem has been particularly acute. The French have argued that the Alsace-Lorrainers could not hope for posts in the civil service of France without having a complete knowledge of the French language. Furthermore, they hold that it is unthinkable in a highly centralized State like France that a portion of the population of the Republic should speak only a foreign tongue. Therefore, Paris prescribed that French should be the sole language of instruction in the schools, making the announcement in a circular of January 15, 1920. This was designed “to assure immediately the pre-eminence of French, so as to effect a *rapprochement* between the children on both sides of the Vosges by means of community of language, unity of spirit and harmony of affections. Its original purpose, which has been realized, was to transform the schools into French schools, in which German will continue to be taught, and not into German schools which, conceding a place to the French language, would have grafted it on to the German dialect.”³⁸ The decree provided, however, that religious instruction might be given in French or in German, as the teacher chose.

Although the children must speak French in school, the large majority speak the local dialect at home and among themselves. After they leave school they have more chance to speak German than French. One hears much more German or dialect spoken to this day on the streets and in the shops of Strasbourg and Colmar than French, although most of the shop-keepers, tram-conductors, and tradespeople speak some French. After the Armistice the French changed the German names of many of the principal streets to French names. For instance, the *Neue Strasse* is now the *Rue du 22 Novembre*, commemorating the date of the entry of the French troops into Strasbourg after the Armistice; the central square, formerly called the *Kaiserplatz*, has been re-christened *Place de la République*, and so on.

37. Georges Wolf, *Das Elsassische Problem*, p. 49.

38. Niboyet, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 796.

GERMAN ON SCHOOL CURRICULA

Although French is the language of instruction in the schools, France has always recognized that German should also be taught. The natives of the border provinces need a "foreign" language. Therefore, it was decreed that three hours a week, from the third to the last year of primary instruction, should be devoted to German. In October 1927 it was decided to start the teaching of German in the second half of the second year.³⁹

The chief difficulty in making French the sole language of instruction in the schools was that the majority of the teachers and most of the pupils did not speak the language. The former set to work at once to learn French as best as they could; the pupils had to be taught it before they could be taught their reading, writing and arithmetic in what was practically a foreign tongue. Many people in the provinces felt that their children's education was being seriously hampered. Furthermore, especially in the rural districts, the parents complained that since they themselves could not read or write French the fact that their children were taught to read and write in that language as their primary language would make communication between these two generations difficult when the younger people left home. Opposition became more prevalent, especially since other grievances have aggravated the *malaise*.

There has been much criticism of the move to start the teaching of German earlier in the schools. Ardent French patriots feel too much time is given to German; on the other hand, ardent Alsatian "home-rulers" feel it is too little. Furthermore, the schools in the recovered provinces have the same number of classroom hours as schools of the same grade throughout France and must prepare their pupils for the same State examinations. But they must devote much more time to French instruction than the primary schools in the interior of France. In addition they must give each week three hours of instruction in German, and—a requirement which does not obtain anywhere else in France—four hours of instruction in religion. The problem is a difficult one.

39. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 265-67.

Many of the natives of the provinces are convinced that the people should be bilingual in French and German and that Alsace-Lorraine has as its destiny the task of acting as a bridge between France and Germany instead of an eternal cause of contention. The most ardent "home-rulers" declare that German is the basis of their culture and must continue to be so, that the relation of the two languages in Alsace-Lorraine should be the same as it is in Switzerland.

M. Poincaré, in a speech at the University of Strasbourg on April 21, 1927, expressed the view of the government in regard to the language question:

"It has been said that France has sought to destroy the Alsatian dialect, to prevent children from corresponding in German with their parents who do not know French and to forbid the giving of religious instruction in German. All that is false, and it is indispensable that it remain false, not only on paper but in fact. On the other hand, when M. Charlety⁴⁰ and I spoke of bilingual schools, some fervent defenders of the French language feared that French would lose its favored status in the educational system and be pushed into second place. This fear is no better founded than the other. Children need to know how to write German wherever German is spoken by their parents. They need to know it also because they live in a frontier region in which it was spoken even before 1870. But they should know French as well as German, because French is the national language; because it is only through the understanding of French that they can have intercourse with their compatriots, that they can open the doors of public administration, that they can easily enter into commercial and industrial relations with the rest of the fatherland."⁴¹

THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

One of the most important of the complex causes making for the *malaise* in Alsace-Lorraine is the religious question. It is closely linked with the school and language problems and with political questions as well.

As has been stated, the great majority of the inhabitants of the recovered provinces are Catholic. The following table, representing the religious affiliations of the people, is based on figures from the 1926 census:

40. The educational director of the French government in Alsace-Lorraine from 1919 to 1927.

41. *L'Alsace-Française*, May 14, 1927, p. 389.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS OF INHABITANTS OF ALSACE-LORRAINE⁴²

	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish	No Religion
Bas-Rhin	413,508	191,098	13,177	53,202
Haut-Rhin	421,767	52,499	5,703	10,685
Moselle	585,228	31,524	7,243	9,466
Total	1,420,503	275,121	26,123	73,353

The relations of Church and State in Alsace-Lorraine have been regulated since 1801 by a concordat with the Holy See, negotiated by Napoleon I. Even under German rule the same arrangement obtained. In France, however, the concordat was abrogated in 1905, and since the early eighties there has been no religious education in the schools.

Under the terms of the Napoleonic concordat, the government must nominate bishops, pay the salaries of priests, pastors and rabbis, and insure religious instruction in the schools. In the rest of France none of these functions is undertaken by the State. After the Armistice the French government, nevertheless, did carry on these various duties in the recovered provinces. As long as the *Bloc National* governed France there was no particular trouble. The French government declared repeatedly that it intended to respect the religious rights and privileges of Alsace-Lorraine. Furthermore, the resumption of diplomatic relations between France and the Vatican in 1921 seemed a guarantee of the good faith of Paris.

However, after the accession of M. Edouard Herriot to power in 1924, supported by an anti-clerical coalition of Radicals and Socialists, a sort of *Kulturkampf* began in Alsace-Lorraine. Twenty-one out of twenty-four deputies and senators from the recovered provinces protested vehemently and the Bishops of Strasbourg and Metz appealed to their flocks to organize themselves in defense of their religious rights. Meetings of protest were held in various cities which were attended by thousands of people.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
IN THE SCHOOLS

The most important act of the government at Paris was directed against religious

instruction in the schools in Alsace-Lorraine. Under the terms of the concordat, such instruction is part of the regular curriculum of these schools. Furthermore, most of the schools are "confessional schools"—that is Catholic schools for Catholic children, Protestant schools for Protestants and Jewish schools for Jews. Besides the confessional schools, there are some so-called "inter-confessional" schools—i. e. schools attended by children of all faiths, who receive their religious instruction in separate groups from representatives of their respective creeds. In the inter-confessional schools, secular instruction is given to all the children together. It was against the whole system of religious instruction in the schools that M. Herriot started to take action.

On March 6, 1925 M. Herriot sent a telegram to the prefects of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle, stating that the time had come to extend the system of inter-confessional schools and to supplant the confessional schools with them. It is an evidence of the tender state of public opinion in Alsace-Lorraine, especially as regards religious matters, that this move of M. Herriot's raised a great storm of protest. It was looked upon as a first step toward unifying the schools of the recovered provinces with those of the rest of France, where there is no religious instruction.

Almost at once there arose a question of the establishment of an inter-confessional school at Colmar which precipitated matters. The Bishop of Strasbourg ordered parents in his diocese not to send their children to the inter-confessional schools and furthermore ordered a school strike. As a result there was a one-day strike in all the towns in his diocese—except in Colmar itself, where the strike lasted three days. These facts are illustrative not only of the feeling in the provinces but of the power of the clergy.

⁴². Répertoire des Communes des Départements du Bas-Rhin, du Haut-Rhin et de la Moselle, cited, p. xviii, xix.

The Herriot Ministry fell in April 1925, chiefly because of financial difficulties. Its successors at the Elysée Palace have not taken any positive action directed toward the introduction into Alsace-Lorraine of French anti-clerical legislation. The two Socialist deputies from Alsace, however, in May 1927 introduced a bill into the Chamber which provided for complete abrogation of the concordat, abolition of religious instruction and restriction of religious orders. The bill was not passed, but is indicative of the anti-religious sentiment of even the Alsatian Socialists.

OPPOSITION TO FRENCH POLICY

Since 1924 several influential Catholic priests have taken up the cudgels for the autonomists. Abbés Fashauer and Haegy in Colmar and Abbé Valentiny in Metz are the most outstanding; all three of them edit autonomist newspapers. Abbé Haegy has been perhaps the most in the limelight because of his libel suit against the *Paris Journal*, which in January 1927 accused him of accepting German money to conduct anti-French propaganda in Alsace. M. Helsey of the *Journal* could not prove his charges; neither could the Abbé obtain a judgment. The impending deadlock was finally broken in a blaze of patriotic oratory from the judge in a plea that both sides forget their differences. Both sides affirmed their loyalty to France, the *Marseillaise* was sung, flowers were exchanged and the case ended.

Abbé Haegy is the editor of a chain of papers, two German and one French in Colmar, one German and one French in Strasbourg, and a great number of small rural sheets, with a combined circulation of some 42,000. He is a philosophically in-

clined, gentle-seeming priest who explains his autonomist principles by saying that he has lived to see the worst of both German and French nationalism and is disgusted with both. Speaking French and German equally well himself, he is a strong supporter of bilingualism in Alsace-Lorraine and feels that it is the mission of the provinces to act as a link between France and Germany, and to preserve the best of both cultures. The fact that Abbé Haegy is a disciple of the well-known philosopher Faulhaber of Munich and has studied under him is used against him by French patriots as an evidence of his pro-Germanism. He is the son of simple Alsatian peasants and seems to understand the mentality of the natives—a fact which probably explains the undoubtedly large influence which he exercises through his newspapers.

Protestants, too, although compared to the Catholics there are not very many of them, have been greatly disturbed by the religious situation. In some respects their position has been difficult, for under German rule the Protestant pastors for the most part enjoyed greater prestige than is possible under French rule. They have been inclined to regard local autonomy as the best régime from their point of view.

The language question has been especially acute in its relation to the religious problem. Religious instruction in French, which the government appears to expect, seems extremely inadequate to the religious authorities since for most Alsatian children French is still virtually a foreign tongue. For the Protestants, the majority of whom are Lutherans, it has been especially difficult, for many of the pastors of the Lutheran churches do not speak French.⁴³

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Between 1918 and 1925 there was, relatively speaking, little political unrest in Alsace-Lorraine. The major political party in Alsace was the *Union Populaire Républicaine*, usually called the U.P.R.; in Lorraine the *Union Républicaine Lorraine* was the name given to the same party. The U.P.R. represented a continuation of the party which had been affiliated with the

German Center party before 1918 and which had been very critical of the German imperial government. It was of course largely Catholic and particularly strong in the country districts. The U.P.R.

43. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 268-274; Wolf, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Harold Callender, "Alsace-Lorraine Since the War," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1927; W. R. Batsell, "French Blundering in Alsace-Lorraine," *Current History*, April 1929; Edmond Vermeil, "Le Problème religieux en Alsace," *La Revue des Vivants*, August 1928; Gillouin, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

seems to have been completely loyal to France, although its program asked for regional autonomy, bilingualism in the schools, the courts and the civil service and the maintenance of the concordat—the religious *status quo*. The party was allied to the French *Bloc National* in the general elections of 1919 and 1924.

Another political party in Alsace-Lorraine was allied to the *Bloc National*—the *Parti Démocratique*. This was a party of business men, Protestant pastors and pro-French bourgeois. It, too, asked for the maintenance of the religious *status quo*, for the teaching of German in the schools and for a certain amount of regional autonomy. However, its chief preoccupation was opposition to “Bolshevism,” which was the principal plank in its platform. It also stressed its love for France. These two parties secured an absolute majority of the votes in the recovered provinces at the 1919 general elections; at the 1924 elections they received a plurality.

Opposed to the U.P.R. and the *Parti Démocratique* in the 1919 and 1924 elections were smaller groups of Socialists and Radicals. These parties advocated the rapid assimilation of Alsace-Lorraine by the centralized French State and the abrogation of such provincial legislation as did not correspond with that in the rest of France. The Socialists, however, wished to retain the German social insurance laws. On the whole these groups were anti-clerical, anti-capitalist, anti-militarist and, as far as relations between Alsace-Lorraine and France were concerned, strongly nationalist.

It should be noted that autonomism has been more prevalent in Alsace than in Lorraine. This may be due in part to temperamental differences, the Alsatians being more aggressive than the Lorrainers. Another cause has doubtless been the fact that there are more French-speaking people in Lorraine than in Alsace. There is, too, a decided jealousy between the two cities of Metz and Strasbourg. Under a regional government, Strasbourg would again become the capital of the provinces, as it was under Germany—a development which would be extremely distasteful to the Lorrainers.

THE RISE OF THE AUTONOMY MOVEMENT

After 1924 the breach between French patriots and Alsatian “home-rulers” began to widen. This was doubtless caused by the policies of the Herriot government, particularly in religious matters. About that time Abbé Haegy in Alsace and Abbé Valentiny in Lorraine, both of the U.P.R., began to write in their various newspapers about the necessity for Alsatians and Lorrainers to unite in defense of their traditional home rights and in demands for regional autonomy. They did not content themselves with opposing the “anti-clerical” tendencies of Paris but criticized the French régime in general. This alienated many pro-French members in their own groups and led to the establishment in Strasbourg and Metz of new Catholic newspapers which have been extremely nationalist, pro-French and anti-autonomist.⁴⁴ The same divergent tendencies appeared among the Democratic groups. In 1924 a specially patriotic group was organized in Alsace, called the “National Republican Committee,” which noisily demanded rapid and complete assimilation of Alsace-Lorraine with France. It was intensely anti-German and always on the lookout for German propaganda in the recovered provinces. Another group, organized about this time in Lorraine and called the “Democratic and Republican National Union,” supported the League of Nations and the Locarno settlement, advocated international peace and ardently favored bilingualism and regionalism in Alsace-Lorraine. The non-bourgeois groups were also split among themselves on this issue. The Communist party, formed in 1920, curiously enough has supported cultural and political autonomy as a means of weakening the French government in Paris. The Socialists, on the other hand, have become more and more nationalist and are ardent adherents of centralization and assimilation. In 1925 the ultra-patriotic royalist group in France, the *Action Française*, founded at Strasbourg a weekly newspaper called *Le National*. The *Action Française* had secured a small but noisy following in Alsace-Lorraine and *Le National*, although

44. Cf. p. 480.

written in German, was very anti-German in content. Some of the more ardent members of the group have on more than one occasion gone so far as to use physical force against members of autonomist organizations.

The mere threat of the anti-clerical, centralizing tendencies of the Radical-Socialist Herriot government seems to have brought to a head the so-called *malaise* in the recovered provinces. Agitation for special linguistic and religious privileges came more and more to be coupled with a demand for regional autonomy. In 1925 under the leadership of Dr. Ricklin—the physician who had been a prominent Alsatian deputy in the German Reichstag before 1918 and a leader in the struggle for Alsatian autonomy under German rule—a group of extremists founded a newspaper, *Die Zukunft*. The purpose of this organ was to agitate for political and cultural home rule. At about the same time another paper devoted to the same ideals, *Die Volksstimme*, began to appear.

THE HEIMATBUND MANIFESTO

In the spring of 1926, using these two papers as its organs, a propagandist society, the *Heimatbund*, or "Home League," was constituted. In a manifesto addressed to "all true sons of Alsace-Lorraine" and published in *Die Zukunft* on June 8, 1926, the *Heimatbund* stated that "Alsace had been systematically despoiled for seven years," and declared that there must be complete autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine "within the French State." A separate legislature and administration like those which the provinces had enjoyed under the German law of 1911 were demanded, with a regional capital at Strasbourg. The local authorities, however, were to cooperate with the national Parliament in Paris. These reforms, it was stated, would solve the educational and religious difficulties of Alsace-Lorraine. The manifesto made many specific demands: the German language, "inasmuch as it is the mother tongue of the majority of the population," must be given the position in public life which it deserves; the schools must be brought under local control; the railways must be operated by Alsace-Lorraine; there must be local protection for agriculture, and for the commerce and in-

dustry of the provinces, in particular the wine industry.⁴⁵ Reorganization of the fiscal system and preservation of local, social and municipal legislation were stipulated, and the manifesto demanded that Alsace-Lorraine be recognized as a region in which "two great cultures exist side by side without the destruction of either." The manifesto stated that the signatories thereto did not wish to be a political party but merely an organization "which will stimulate the existing parties of the land to abandon policies of delay, weakness, and illusion and to lead with unwavering courage the fight for the home rights (*Heimatrechte*) of Alsace-Lorraine." The manifesto was signed by Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, publicists, school-teachers, local officials and other prominent persons.⁴⁶

At once the patriotic French press attacked the *Heimatbund*. Believing, as do most French nationalists, that those who are not with them are against them, the *Heimatbund's* program for autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine was regarded as merely a disguise to cover the leaders' real desire and purpose: to return to German rule. It was charged that the movement was financed by German money and that many of the leaders were in German pay. This has of course been stoutly denied by the officials of the *Heimatbund*. The charge of German propaganda has inflamed the minds of Frenchmen, both in the recovered provinces and in the rest of France, and has perhaps made it more difficult for the Alsations to secure a hearing for their grievances which even some Frenchmen regard as just.

The manifesto of the *Heimatbund* was received with disapproval by the most important political groups in Alsace and Lorraine—the U.P.R. and the U.R.L.⁴⁷—in spite of the fact that they sympathized with many of its specific demands. Political autonomy was viewed as being "too radical." In Alsace the U.P.R. refused political cooperation with the *Heimatbund*, and in Lorraine its members were ostracized by the U.R.L. Furthermore, the Bishop of Metz sharply criticized its policies and the Bishop of

45. The wine industry seems to be the only industry which has suffered to any extent by the re-annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to France.

46. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 282; Information Service on International Affairs, *Bulletin of International News*, Vol. V, No. 16, February 16, 1929, p. 5.

47. Cf. p. 475.

Strasbourg, Mgr. Ruch, went so far as to order the Catholics in his diocese not to read *Die Zukunft*. The result of this criticism from the more moderate groups was that the *Heimattbund* began to cooperate to some extent with the Communists, a circumstance which aroused a good deal of apprehension in the rest of France.

GROWTH OF OTHER PARTIES

Toward the end of 1926 a political party called the *Elsässische Fortschrittspartei* (Alsatian Progressive party) was founded under the leadership of Georges Wolf. Much more moderate than the *Heimattbund*, it was, however, very insistent on the preservation of the regional rights and privileges of the recovered provinces. It did not desire regional autonomy as did the *Heimattbund*, but steered a more middle course and advocated a general decentralization for the whole of France and the enlargement of the functions of the *départements* and *arrondissements* of the Republic. Its specific demands comprised the use of German for early instruction in the schools of the recovered provinces, with the later and gradual introduction of French; guarantees to native officials of their traditional privileges and reversal of the policy of appointing Frenchmen from the interior to the best posts in the local civil service; continuation of religious instruction in the schools and of the concordat to regulate the relations of Church and State in Alsace-Lorraine; amendment of the French civil code to better the legal position of women; and *rapprochement* between France and Germany.⁴⁸ A weekly periodical, *Das neue Elsass*, was founded to propagandize for the party. A large number of the more moderate elements, favoring regional rights but not inclined to ally themselves with either the *Heimattbund* or the Communists, were attracted to the Progressive party.

A third group, under the leadership of Claus Zorn von Bulach, was working for "home rights" and, it was alleged by some, for eventual separation from France. The "Alsatian Opposition Bloc," as it was called,

demanding that the Alsace-Lorrainers be treated as "first-class" rather than "second-class" Frenchmen. Their organ was a fortnightly publication, *Die Wahrheit*, founded in the spring of 1927. The methods of this group seem to have been quite lacking in finesse and alienated sensitive French opinion still more in regard to Alsace-Lorraine.

FRENCH CURB ON ALSATIAN ACTIVITIES

On September 25, 1927 a new manifesto was issued jointly by *Die Zukunft* and *Die Volksstimme*, and on October 1, 1927 the leaders of the *Heimattbund* formed a political party—the Autonomist party. Its program comprised "immediate Home Rule within the framework of France," as a first step toward the establishment of a free Alsace-Lorraine within "the United States of Europe."⁴⁹ The growing discontent and agitation in the recovered provinces alarmed Paris and annoyed the government greatly; M. Poincaré felt that drastic measures to curb the Alsatians were necessary. As a result, on November 13, 1927, the French government issued a decree suppressing *Die Zukunft*, *Die Volksstimme* and *Die Wahrheit*. A 34-year-old law permitting the government to suppress anti-patriotic newspapers published in a foreign language gave a legal basis for the suppressions; the fact that this law had been originally directed against some Italian anarchist papers did not help to calm the enraged Alsatians. Furthermore, German being the language of some 80 per cent of the people of Alsace-Lorraine, the natives felt that it could hardly be regarded as a foreign language. In February 1926 *Die Freiheit*, the Alsatian Communist weekly, was added to the list of suppressed papers and in March the organ of the Progressive party, *Das neue Elsass*, was also banned.

In the meantime, prominent autonomists were arrested and put into jail, on the charge of plotting against the internal security of the State. They included M. Rossé (the president of the Federation of Functionaries),⁵⁰ Dr. Ricklin, M. Schall (the

49. *Bulletin of International News*, op. cit., p. 6.

48. Georges Wolf, in *Das Elsässische Problem*, published in May 1926, gives his views on the question, which for the most part were later embodied in the program of the Progressive party. The present leader of the party is Camille Dahlet.

50. M. Rossé seems to have been charged also with plotting against the "credit of the State." He had been imprisoned before the others, he told the author of this report, because of his connection with the so-called "Sapart" affair, a holding company which he had started in order to secure the savings of himself and a few other individuals.

editor of *Die Zukunft*), Abbé Fashauer, Dr. Roos (former secretary of the *Heimattbund*), and many others. In all some 29 seem to have been arrested and others escaped arrest only by fleeing to Switzerland. Furthermore, it is alleged that over 100 private houses were searched for incriminating evidence, that freedom of assembly was interfered with by the French government, and that a sort of censorship of postal and telephone communications was instituted.⁵¹

In April 1928 there were general elections and the effect of the action of the French government was clearly apparent. In the three *départements* of Alsace-Lorraine, only six or seven deputies out of twenty-five were elected who were opposed to the regionalist movement. And this in spite of the fact that the autonomist votes were scattered among rival candidates of the Autonomist, Progressive, and Communist parties as well as the regionalist wings of the Democratic party and the U.P.R. Furthermore, two autonomists who were in prison and awaiting trial—Dr. Ricklin and M. Rossé—were elected to the Chamber by large majorities. The drastic action of the French in Alsace-Lorraine had made martyrs of the autonomist leaders and helped the movement all along the line.⁵²

THE COLMAR TRIAL

On May 1, 1928 the trial of the fifteen autonomists in custody opened in Colmar. There was great excitement, not only in the recovered provinces but also in the rest of France, and many of the Paris newspapers sent down special correspondents. The international press was also well represented.

The verdict was not handed down until May 24 and throughout the trial there had been the greatest excitement in Alsace-Lorraine. The charges were not formulated by the government with much exactitude and both the prosecution and the defense were therefore under the necessity of justifying themselves. Finally, on May 10, in the ninth session, the Public Prosecutor stated that "the accused had conspired to change

the form of government of the State and to incite the people to arm."⁵³ It was stated that proof for this charge had been found in the files of the accused which had been seized by the police.

The accused were charged under an article of the *Code Napoléon*, which is directed against interference with the succession to the throne. Furthermore, they were charged with having drawn up lists of persons for enrollment in a defensive force. And the prosecution maintained that the suppressed autonomist newspapers had been financed from abroad—from Germany and Switzerland.

Finally, after attempting to produce evidence of the actual existence of a definite plot against the State, the Public Prosecutor merely contended that there was sufficient evidence to establish "an agreement and determination to take action." The jury was charged to answer seventeen questions, the first three of which were: "Did a plot exist? If so, what part did the accused play in it? Had any steps been taken to put it into execution?" The defense, while admitting the desire to secure a measure of autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine, strongly denied that this had in any way threatened the security of the French State. The difference between separatism and autonomy was stressed again and again, and the leaders of the movement denied that they had even contemplated separation from France. "Autonomy within the framework of France" had been their program, they contended.

During the trial, a large section of the population seems to have become convinced that the State had not in any way proved its case and that a verdict against the leaders of the movement was impossible. The jury,⁵⁴ however, found Dr. Ricklin, M. Rossé, M. Schall and Abbé Fashauer guilty of "acting with intent to destroy or change the government and to incite the citizens and inhabitants to take arms against the government." They were sentenced to a year's imprisonment, with five years' *interdiction de séjour* (prohibition of travel in certain

51. *Der Fall Ricklin-Rossé vor der Kammer*, p. 2-3. More than 70 Alsatian families were searched on Christmas Eve 1927, according to this pamphlet.

52. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 286, 287; *Elsässer Kurier*, April 23, 1928.

53. Cf. *Bulletin of International News*, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7; *Der Komplott-Prozess von Colmar vom 1-24 Mai 1928, Gesammelte Verhandlungsberichte*, p. 80.

54. The jury is alleged not to have been representative of the common people of Alsace. The fact that French is the court language limits greatly the number of people eligible for jury duty. For the most part, these are the pro-French, nationalist bourgeoisie, many of whom have returned to the provinces from the interior of France.

parts of the country). The other eleven were acquitted.

At Strasbourg, on June 7, 1928, another group of autonomists were tried on a charge of espionage, found guilty and sentenced to eight months' imprisonment, five years' *interdiction de séjour* and fines of 300 francs. They were later acquitted, however, on appeal. Still another group who had fled from France were tried *in absentia* on June 12, convicted and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment.

In the recovered provinces the verdicts caused a furor. The people felt that there was no justice to be had in a French court of law, and feeling against Paris ran high. Mass meetings and protests in the press made unmistakably evident the feeling of the Alsace-Lorrainers. Finally, the French government decided to display a more conciliatory spirit, and during July President Doumergue formally pardoned Claus Zorn von Bulach, Professor Rossé, Abbé Fashauer, M. Schall and Dr. Ricklin. M. Rossé and Dr. Ricklin were, however, not allowed to take their places in the French Chamber on the ground that they had been convicted on a criminal charge and had therefore lost their rights of citizenship. A debate in the Chamber in November 1928 was held amid scenes of considerable disorder, and the election of Dr. Ricklin and M. Rossé declared null and void. In January 1929 by-elections were held in Alsace to fill the seats, but the two deputies elected were merely representatives of the two unseated deputies.⁵⁵

In the meantime, elections to the General Councils of the *départements*, held in October 1928, showed that the autonomists had gained strength in Alsace-Lorraine even since the general election of April 1928.⁵⁶ And after the October elections, the U.P.R. definitely split, the right wing (anti-autonomist) calling itself *L'Action Populaire Nationale*. A new paper, *Der Elsässer Bote*, was founded to support its views.

⁵⁵. *Bulletin of International Affairs*, op. cit., p. 8. MM. Sturmel and Hauss, the newly elected deputies, were both original signers of the *Heimabund* manifesto and had stood trial at Colmar.

⁵⁶. Hayes, op. cit., p. 288; *Le Temps*, October 23, 1928; *Frankfurter Zeitung, Abendblatt*, October 25, 1928.

DEBATE IN THE FRENCH CHAMBER

On January 25, 1929 a great debate on Alsace-Lorraine began in the French Chamber which did not end until February 8. A ten-hour speech by M. Poincaré, then head of the French government, was the most important event in the debate. M. Poincaré reviewed in great detail and with much emotion all that the French government had done for the recovered provinces, and at the end he devoted considerable time to quoting from various pronouncements of the autonomists and condemning their activities. The Chamber evidently agreed with M. Poincaré, for on the motion of a Radical deputy it voted 461 to 17 that "the government, relying on the patriotism of the peoples of Alsace and Lorraine, and their faithful attachment to France, one and indivisible, rejects all amendments and passes to the order of the day." The dissenting votes were those of autonomist and Communist deputies from the recovered provinces.⁵⁷

The lack of sympathy on the part of the Chamber with the claims of the autonomists may probably be explained by the conviction of the large majority of the deputies that the autonomist leaders and the movement itself are not representative of the sentiment of the Alsatian and Lorraine people. The autonomist leaders are regarded as demagogues of the first water, interested in securing influential jobs for themselves in the recovered provinces. The movement, the French are convinced, is an artificial one, financed from abroad and kept alive only through foreign money and foreign influence. This point of view was brought out clearly both during the Colmar trial and in the debate in the Chamber. Furthermore, M. Poincaré is firmly of the belief that the wish for autonomy is nothing more than the first step toward complete separation from France. The repeated declarations of the autonomists that they are striving for autonomy "within the framework of the French State" have fallen on deaf ears. To the French government there is no difference between an autonomist movement and a separatist movement. An Alsatian avowedly

⁵⁷. *Journal des Débats*, February 15, 1929, p. 252. Cf. also *L'Alsace Française*, February 10, 17, 1929, *passim*.

in favor of autonomy is therefore, in the French mind, guilty of high treason against the French State. In their opinion, the only solution of the Alsatian problem seems to lie in eventual complete absorption of the recovered provinces by the rest of France. The restlessness and the desire of Alsace-Lorraine for autonomy while under German rule seem to have been interpreted in France merely as an indication of the unhappiness which separation from France caused the provinces. It was not regarded as a manifestation of an innate independence of spirit which has caused the development of local cultural and political ideas particularly cherished by the inhabitants.

M. Poincaré claimed that the French government had done its best in Alsace-Lorraine and, in proof of this, summarized its good works: redemption of German marks at a valuation of 1.25 francs per mark although the mark was worth only 80 centimes (this had cost the French government over two billion francs); building operations in the provinces to the amount of 2,157 million francs; improvement in the condition and output of the textile and potash industries, as well as in the oil and coal industries; improvement in the position of the railways, of agriculture, of industry and commerce. He stressed the excellent treatment accorded to the provincial officials, the payment of pensions, and stated that the number of officials of local birth had more than doubled since 1918. In regard to the language question, M. Poincaré admitted that

the French government had made a certain number of mistakes, but he maintained that the country had gained more than it had lost and that the French language policy was more liberal than the German had been. Furthermore, he made it quite clear that the government had no intention of attempting to impose on Alsace-Lorraine the French *lois de laïcité*, which abolished religious instruction in the schools, unless the majority of the people of the provinces themselves asked for it. The last part of M. Poincaré's speech was devoted to the reading of extracts from articles which had appeared in the autonomist press, and which, M. Poincaré maintained, all tended to show that the autonomist leaders were attempting to influence public opinion in favor of a complete separation from France. The Premier then charged that the movement had been largely financed by German money and in proof of this stated that the German budget provided a sum of 94 million marks for propaganda purposes.⁵⁸ And finally, M. Poincaré denied emphatically that the people of Alsace-Lorraine had any right to consider themselves a national minority. He assured the Alsations again that their local customs would not be disturbed, and in a great peroration asked:

"Gentlemen, what is a national minority? It is an ethnical minority living side by side with the predominant people, politically detached from a foreign State and having the right to claim identity with the latter before the League of Nations. No! Alsace is not a national minority."⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

The great debate in the Chamber thus had no tangible results but it may have reassured the Alsations to a certain extent in regard to the preservation of their religious freedom. That there is also some realization of the difficulties is shown by the remarks of the Under-Secretary for Alsace-Lorraine, M. Héraud, in the French Chamber on November 21, 1929.

"In regard to bilingualism . . . I firmly believe that it is necessary in Alsace. Of course, I believe that French culture must undergo a development which will give it the pre-eminent place to which it is entitled. But I believe too that toward a population which speaks a local Ger-

man dialect and uses high German as its written language, it is necessary, indeed it is indispensable, that France should as always show a spirit of understanding and wisdom. It should allow their people to speak the language with which they are familiar, the language learned in infancy, and at the same time to speak French, which should also be considered by the people as a mother tongue.

58. This charge was promptly answered by Dr. Stresemann in a statement specifying the uses to which the German government had actually been putting the funds available for propaganda purposes. He stated that the entire appropriation amounted to only 21,638,000 marks and that only a small part of this sum was for use outside the Reich. (*Frankfurter Zeitung, Erstes Morgenblatt*, February 3, 1929; *Le Temps*, February 3, 1929.)

59. *Bulletin of International News*, op. cit., p. 3-10; *Le Temps*, January 24—February 9, 1929, especially February 3 for complete text of M. Poincaré's speech.

" . . . The fact that an Under-Secretary of State has been charged with the affairs of Alsace-Lorraine does not mean a break with the past; it simply gives a member of the French government the task of dealing with particular interests of these two French provinces.

"There is not one France and one Alsace, there is only France, one and indivisible. This has been said before; I repeat it. In the position with which the head of the government has seen fit to honor me, I intend to carry out a national policy and not a party policy. . . .

"I stand with all those who are French to the core and against all those who are the enemies of France."⁶⁰

Speaking again on November 26, 1929, M. Héraud gave further proof of his understanding of the troubles of the recovered provinces. He said:

"I have said and I repeat that the German language must be learned by all citizens in Alsace in order that people who at home speak only the Alsatian dialect, of which German is the written form, should be able to make themselves understood by their family and in order to use the language with which most of them grew up.

"I said and I repeat also that the French language is the mother tongue of all France and that it must, in Alsace as in the rest of France, be learned by all French citizens.

" . . . I have listened to speeches at the bar delivered in French in the presence of persons who speak only Alsatian and have no contact with the court except through an interpreter. The latter, in spite of his skill and his conscience, risks injuring their interests in his translation of a phrase which involuntarily translates their thought.

"I have been impressed by this situation; I understand its gravity. I desire to remedy it to the greatest possible degree."⁶¹

Municipal elections in May 1929 resulted in a victory of the allied forces of Communists and autonomists in Colmar and in Strasbourg—a fact which has greatly disturbed the rest of France as well as some people in the recovered provinces. The French government, however, seems de-

termined to try to win over the provinces by less violent means than heretofore employed. Thus M. Roos, one of the autonomist leaders condemned *in absentia* in 1928, returned to Strasbourg, gave himself up to the authorities and was prepared to stand his trial. A change of venue from Colmar to Besançon was thought advisable because of the strong feeling in Colmar, and accordingly M. Roos was tried in Besançon in May and was acquitted. Following this, on June 25, 1929, the French government introduced a bill into the Chamber providing amnesty to all accused of implication in autonomist plots in Alsace and to the signers of the autonomist manifesto. An explanatory note from the government stressed the desire to attempt again to wipe out old animosities although previous attempts had been fruitless and had been followed by new troubles.⁶² It is reported that amnesty has been granted.

In October elections were held for the French Senate and Paris has since been rejoicing that Abbé Haegy, a candidate from Alsace, was not successful. It should be added, however, that since only deputies and members of the municipal councils have the right to vote at these elections, they can hardly be considered as affording a real test of popular opinion.⁶³

The Alsatians are a notoriously discontented folk. Many of their grievances against France are doubtless justified; their grievances against Germany were also doubtless quite real. Nevertheless, there is some truth in the old rhyme characterizing the people of these troubled provinces:

Hans, Hans of Schnokeloch
Has all that he desires;
But what he has, he doesn't want,
And what he wants, he hasn't got.
Hans, Hans of Schnokeloch
Has all that he desires.⁶⁴

60. *Journal Officiel*, November 22, 1929. *Débats Parlementaires No. 91, Chambre des Députés, 14e Législature, 2e Session Extraordinaire de 1929; Compte Rendu in Extensio, 14e Séance, jeudi, 21 Novembre 1929*, p. 3,392.

61. *Journal Officiel*, November 27, 1929. *Débats Parlementaires No. 95, Chambre des Députés, 14e Législature, 2e Session Extraordinaire de 1929; Compte Rendu in Extensio, 17e Séance, mardi, 26 novembre 1929*, p. 3,508.

62. *New York Herald Tribune*, June 26, 1929.

63. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 21, 1929.

64. The original, in Alsatian dialect, is as follows:
Der Hans, Hans im Schnokeloch
Hett alles was er will;
Doch was er hett, diss will er nitt,
Un was er will, diss hett er nitt.
Der Hans, Hans im Schnokeloch
Hett alles was er will.